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Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

Sustainable development

Interaction between the United Nations, national parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union

Economic and Social Council
2014 session
Items 5 and 9 of the provisional agenda

High-level segment

Implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits

Summary report of the 2013 parliamentary hearing

Note by the President of the General Assembly

The present document contains the summary report of the 2013 parliamentary hearing, held in New York on 14 and 15 November 2013, which is circulated pursuant to General Assembly resolution 65/123 (see annex I).

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Annex I

Rethinking sustainable development: the quest for a "transformational" agenda in 2015

Parliamentary hearing held at United Nations Headquarters: summary report

1. The 2013 parliamentary hearing was held at United Nations Headquarters on 14 and 15 November. It was organized jointly by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Economic and Social Council, and brought together close to 200 parliamentarians from a range of countries to discuss the theme "Rethinking sustainable development: the quest for a 'transformational' global agenda in 2015". It thus provided a unique opportunity for parliamentarians to bring their own perspective to the ongoing post-2015 development process, including the formulation of a new set of sustainable development goals for both developed and developing countries.

2. The Presidents of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Inter-Parliamentary Union addressed the hearing. A message from the United Nations Secretary-General was also conveyed. Their statements, all of which reaffirmed the role of parliaments in both the design and implementation of the post-2015 agenda, may be found on the Inter-Parliamentary Union website at http://www.ipu.org/Splz-e/unga13.htm.

Session I: A new economic model for sustainable development: The path towards well-being

> Society is faced with a profound dilemma, the growth dilemma.
>
> Professor Tim Jackson, University of Surrey, England
> Author of *Prosperity without Growth*

3. Building on the main outcome of the parliamentary consultation held at the 128th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union held in March 2013, known as the Quito communiqué, the first session of the hearing delved into the question of how to rethink the prevailing growth-centric economic model so that it can promote human well-being as the ultimate aim of sustainable development. Inspired by a powerful keynote statement and an interview session with a mixed panel of parliamentarians and permanent representatives, the debate began by considering the so-called growth dilemma, from both the economic and environmental perspectives.

4. The first horn of the growth dilemma relates to the fact that the consumption levels that the wealthier countries have been enjoying are unsustainable. There seems to be a global recognition of that fact, not least by the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, leading in part to the global ambition to establish sustainable development goals as a way of improving life for people in the long term without ruining the prospects for future generations of being able to realize the same ambition.

5. The new thinking arises not just from ecological considerations, although unbridled growth is a factor of negative developments such as climate change or biodiversity loss, but also from a recognition that the growth-based economy relies unsustainably on resource exploitation. Until the turn of the millennium, resource prices were declining, making resources more accessible to more people, constituting a success story of technology. However, at the beginning of the current millennium, the trend reversed and the price of commodities across the world began to rise, heralding a new economic era in which cheap resource-fuelled growth is no longer possible. Even before the financial crisis of 2008-2009, growth rates in the wealthiest countries had been declining for about a decade.

6. Of course, and as noted by many participants, growth has brought benefits, and, indeed, not only material ones, such as higher life expectancy. Therefore, growth as an economic model is to be understood and actively managed, not simply forsaken. There are many parts of the world where the average annual per capita income is about US$ 10,000 or less and where growth is still vital to promoting the satisfaction of basic needs, such as increased life expectancy and participation in education, reduced infant mortality and maternal morbidity. From the standpoint of the developing world, the post-growth discussion is a luxury of countries that have already grown.

7. There is thus a clear moral imperative to make room for growth and higher consumption where it is genuinely needed. There is no single sustainable development model: strategies will vary depending on countries' circumstances. Social goals must complement economic goals, and above all must not exacerbate income disparity. They must go hand in hand with ambitious environmental policies, otherwise growth will continue to damage the environment and deplete resources.

8. After a certain point in the increasing of per capita income, the pattern of improvement starts to decline. In a paradox of development, advanced countries such as the United States of America and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland have lower life expectancy rates than Chile, Costa Rica or Cuba. Thus, arises the second horn of the growth dilemma, namely, which parliamentarians from developed countries in particular must contend with, why are the wealthy nations still chasing a growth-based economic model when it is clearly not sustainable, when it is not delivering even financial stability and when it is overstepping the most basic ecological and social limits?

9. The growth-based model chases itself continually and, in order to remain stable, has to nurture a consumerist culture where people become dependent on acquiring more things. It is this key feature of the modern economy, the pursuit of labour productivity and innovation, that is keeping the developed world trapped in the same pattern. That pursuit is based on the thesis that if the economy does not grow sufficiently, with more goods and services produced, there will not be enough jobs and therefore not enough tax revenues. Consequently, unemployment will go up, consumption will go down; government deficits will increase, public expenditures will decrease; loan defaults will rise, investment will drop — this is a spiral of collapse. To avert that spiral, the world chases ever more growth, building a complicated set of relationships based on the work of a growing number of people to produce increasing quantities of goods for people to buy, while investing their savings in consumption, and to ensure continuous pursuit of the growth needed to keep economic stability alive. The financial system too conspires to provide

consumers with credit so that they can afford increasing levels of consumption to keep the productive machinery running. Debt thus incurred helps entrench people in the same pattern of overproduction and excessive consumption.

10. It is a paradox that many people in advanced industrialized societies feel highly unsatisfied even though their material needs are met. Life in a consumption-based society produces high levels of anxiety, on which several of the parliamentarians in the room commented, based on their interaction with constituents. Those who are able to participate in consumption do so often at the price not only of excessive debt but also of a quite disproportionate intensity in their working life, and at the same time they are plagued by the anxiety of one day being unable to continue living that way. Meanwhile, those who cannot afford that level of consumption live in the fear that tomorrow things will be even worse.

11. Resolving the growth dilemma requires envisaging a new approach to human well-being: sustainable prosperity, which in turn requires reflection regarding what prosperity really is. What it clearly is not is achievement of more and more material growth or ever greater consumer affluence. Prosperity is as much about our psychological and social health, our ability to enjoy the environment around us, and our sense of belonging in society, as it is about acquiring things. It is the art of living well on a finite planet, with a sense of freedom to be able to make one's own choices. For this vision to take root, however, we need to construct an economic system that is fit for purpose.

> The concept of well-being needs to include the idea of serenity.
>
> Senator Christiane Vienne, Belgium

12. For such a system to succeed, there are three fundamental economic parameters that have to work in the service of human well-being: enterprise, investment and money. The first issue is whether we as human beings can think of enterprise as service, encompassing time dedicated to others, and to improving their quality of life. It is another paradox of the current economic model that the most precious time of all, the unpaid time (mostly among women) used to maintain the household, does not even feature in national accounting. This concept of enterprise, being about service rather than things, is less reliant on material inputs and does not increase environmental damage. Because such enterprise is about working to deliver services to others it is labour-intensive and employment-rich: in construction, renovation, teaching, health care, recreation and leisure activities. The idea of enterprise as service also entails a social dimension, involving the effort to establish a common interest between entrepreneurs and workers.

13. Investment is another important economic relationship, defining the relation between the present and the future. It has to be re-envisioned and transformed from a speculative activity exclusively for private gain to one dedicated to the maintenance and protection of the ecological assets on which true prosperity depends. This will entail investing in the technologies that will reduce the environmental footprint, and in the green economy including renewable energy, as well as in infrastructure and public transport, and in the services that will create an enterprise economy, with jobs.

14. The final economic factor to be rethought is money itself and its complex nature. Most economists failed to predict the 2008 crisis because they did not understand that roughly 90 per cent of money is not created by sovereign States but through credit from commercial banks.

15. This is a dimension of the financial system that at one level is purely speculative, that is, the lending by the financial system to financial institutions to enable them to gamble on asset prices and expand the liquidity of the economy in the hope that it will drive growth forward. The world needs a money system that is anchored in the real economy and that is fit for purpose, delivering investment and enterprise for real human prosperity.

16. To a small extent, this is already happening, for example, through small-scale community lending, which is beginning to deliver some desirable outcomes in terms of improved well-being. Additionally, some mainstream institutional investors are beginning to perceive so-called impact investment as a means of achieving a profound rethinking of the investment architecture. However, money itself is determined at the macroeconomic level. It is not enough to observe heartwarming small-scale examples: we must also look at how the money supply is created, regulated and taxed.

> It is evident that those societies in which inequalities are especially high lead to negative outcomes for both rich and poor, with the widening wealth gap resulting in severe problems of health and social cohesion. It is in those societies where inequality is not so marked that people are happier.
>
> Petra Bayr, National Council of Austria

17. Clearly, and as many participants noted, measuring a country's performance by gross domestic product (GDP) alone gives a very narrow idea of prosperity and human development. Some attempts have been made to measure prosperity in a different way, as evidenced by Bhutan's Gross National Happiness Index, and the Happy Planet Index, which include concepts such as a country's ecological or carbon footprint and people's happiness unrelated to material possessions. The measurement of GDP could also be expanded to include intangibles, for example, the value of the social services provided by a forest versus the one-time income derived from cutting it down to sell the product as fuel.

> Denmark has increased its GDP by about 70 per cent while keeping its energy input more or less constant, through gains in the energy efficiency of industry and housing. If goals are established for changing investment behaviour patterns, such far-reaching changes are possible.
>
> Ib Petersen, Permanent Representative of Denmark to the United Nations

18. "Dematerializing" growth is certainly a key step towards more sustainable economics. However, it is not entirely clear how far this can go. Some improvements are possible, but they are likely not to be sufficient. More resource productivity and better energy efficiency can be achieved, for example, by substituting renewables for fossil fuels (stocks of which in any event will be exhausted in 20-30 years), provided that there is a set of institutions that can

facilitate those changes. However, pursuing the route of dematerialization, with the aim of providing the entire world with a "Western" lifestyle, would require a greater than 100-fold improvement in technical efficiency: a change greater and faster than any ever achieved in human history. Even if this were technically possible, it will not be achievable in the present system. In some way or another, the model must be changed at its core.

19. A new economic model is needed for both developed and developing countries — one that redefines well-being as something based not on consumption but on solidarity and sustainable development. Intrinsic to this should be the application of the principles of equality, inclusion and respect for nature to guiding public policy at all levels and in all areas — economic, social and environmental. As seen in countries such as Ecuador, through a recasting of the role of the State and with the establishment of public policies based on solidarity, growth is still possible, but achievable in a more harmonious manner.

20. Some participants also noted that in many developing countries, the pursuit of growth went hand in hand with deregulation and liberalization of the economy, and ultimately led to levels of indebtedness, that are proving unsustainable. In some cases, this has resulted, over decades, in Governments giving greater priority to paying off a huge debt to foreign multinationals and official lenders than to investing in education, health and the human development of its citizens. The same is true for the policies of austerity that many are pursuing, which are undermining the social fabric and the public sector's capacity to play a proactive role in the management of the economy. In resource-rich countries, in particular, this role may require making sure that resource revenues accrue fairly to the government, and that they are disbursed in areas such as education, health and human development. Nature and other public goods should not be relinquished to the private sector without appropriate legal guarantees that society as a whole will benefit. Embedding the rights of nature directly in a country's constitution may provide a first critical bulwark against overexploitation of resources, consistent with an overall policy on well-being.

21. A model based on the social economy would encompass an image of a human being that is fundamentally different from that based on the narrow understanding of neoclassical economics, which assumes that all individuals are driven exclusively by their own interest. Understanding who we are as people belonging to a society, and not just as individuals, can change the way in which economic relationships work.

22. As many authoritative reports over the years have shown, a turning point in the relationship between economic growth and well-being comes at a national average income level of about US$ 10,000-15,000. In an ideal world, those attaining that level of income would then recalibrate their growth model so that it would cease to grow in terms of *per capita* material consumption, with the emphasis shifting to greater production of public goods and other social assets. However, some doubt was expressed by participants regarding just how such a revolutionary concept would work in the real world. Pursuit of growth is a highly entrenched instinct, given that humans always aspire to make a better life for themselves. While the notion that prosperity is a right, including the possibility of development, is highly appealing, means must be found of achieving such goals. Goals alone are not enough: strategies are needed to pave the way towards them.

23. To be realistic, this new development model has to allow for four other aspects of human nature: power, domination, fear and greed — all of which are best exemplified today by the way in which capital moves around the world. Additionally, most human beings have a short-sighted concern centred around the here and now rather than the future; hence, it is difficult for even the most visionary of politicians to escape such pressure. One wonders how a sustainable development model will deal with those issues, which are so fundamental to human nature and which drive exploitation and consumption, and the manic behaviour at play in the world's stock markets.

> Capital will always move rapidly to where production is cheapest, where resources are easy to obtain, where protection of human rights is low, where repatriation of profits is easy and where there is little or no legislation to prevent damage to the environment.
>
> Senator from Pakistan

24. Even if it is true that existing economics, governed by consumerism fuelled by financial expansion, is fundamentally unstable and headed for a dead end, it will still be necessary to develop a new economic model for sustainability. This will require novel models of institutions, enterprise, investment, money and other inputs — all of which can be adjusted to support a different consciousness of who we are as human beings.

25. Parliamentarians have a key role to play in specifying a common set of sustainable development goals which will define the world in which we want to be living in 15 or 20 years. Parliamentarians have to be the champions, of helping not only to define these goals but to rally the world around them. Parliamentarians need to give assurances to the world that such changes are feasible, because at present people are groping in the dark, talking at cross-purposes. Changing the current discourse about the economy and the associated psychological stresses will involve asking some difficult questions about money and power, how they are interlinked and how they are unfairly distributed in society. A new economics will be possible only if all people can participate in decision-making at both the national and international levels and if vested interests are brought under closer scrutiny by the public at large.

> It is you members of parliament who control the high ground in your countries on policies and legislation. I am pleading with you to really engage and take home and take to heart what is being said here today.
>
> Ambassador Machana Kamau
> Co-chair of the Open Working Group
> of the General Assembly on the Sustainable Development Goals

26. At the same time, parliamentarians are in a difficult situation because they are being asked to make decisions that affect people's lives, while dealing with institutions and complexities that are almost impossible to understand and that have been designed to drive economics in a deeply inequitable direction. An example of

this is the whole market for "derivatives", about which most people understand very little. Additionally, parliamentarians on the one hand are faced with major budget constraints and on the other are being asked to pass laws to protect the institutions that led to those shortfalls in the first place. This requires parliamentarians to pay close attention to the financial sector and look for ways to better regulate it. Governments and parliamentarians should be protecting the sovereign power of nations to create a money supply that is appropriate.

27. Parliamentarians have to secure consent to transformation within their constituencies. Faced with change, people tend to huddle around what they already have, reluctant to give anything up without knowing how it will be replaced. An important first step would be to draw up an objective accounting of the outcome of the Millennium Development Goals exercise in order to demonstrate where it has brought gains for individuals and countries. That will open the door to the presentation of a concrete project designed to develop and implement sustainable development goals.

28. A simple but indispensable step that parliamentarians might take to start the move towards sustainability would be enactment of a provision that their country's performance should no longer be measured by GDP alone, as well as establishment of indicators and institutions to monitor well-being in all its dimensions. Another initial step would be to subject corporations to strong environmental, human rights and labour laws and ensure that these are not evaded by moving production to lower-standard countries.

29. There will be resistance to those ideas, as there will be to the whole concept of moving away from the consumerist development model. The status quo has a powerful political, intellectual and academic army behind it, as can be seen in the challenges facing the United Nations as it tries to move ahead with the climate change debate. Meaningful debate will be resisted by vested interests, politicians, businessmen and intellectuals, and by those who wish to keep the status quo for its own sake, not understanding the detrimental impacts of a broken economic system on society as a whole. Education will be very important in overcoming that resistance, particularly when directed at youth. Education can help create an enlightened new generation empowered to transform the system and embrace a new form of development.

Main conclusions

- Sustainable development is not possible under the current economic model based on ever growing consumption. Growth itself needs to be understood more broadly so as to include the growth of the individual and of society, with human well-being as its end goal.
- The green economy and various efforts aimed at dematerialization are necessary but insufficient steps to place the world on a sustainable course. A more fundamental shift will occur if policies are redirected towards well-being and not growth for growth's sake. A truly green economy will need to be much less reliant on consumerism as a driver of growth and purveyor of well-being.
- In countries below a certain income level, economic growth is still needed both to raise material prosperity and for the intangible benefits it brings.

However, these countries can already begin to change course along with the developed countries by rethinking the purpose and uses of investments, money and enterprises from a more socially oriented perspective. An economics of financial and fiscal stability will have to underpin this effort at both national and global levels.

- To ease the shift to a new economics of well-being, new indicators in addition to GDP will be needed, going beyond material income to encompass other less tangible elements such as contentment and a sense of harmony. Such a change will require a significant change in people's attitudes, a change that parliamentarians are well placed to bring about.

Session II: Gender as a linchpin of development: how to frame a new goal?

30. The United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union have a long history of engagement to advance women's empowerment and women's rights, including by working together in support of the Millennium Development Goals. Yet, the gender-related Millennium Development Goals, primarily in the areas of education and health, did not tackle the structural causes of gender inequality, such as violence against women, unpaid care work, limited control over assets and unequal participation in decision-making. Similarly, progress in other Millennium Development Goals did not necessarily lead to gender equality, women's rights and women's empowerment.

31. The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) is calling for a comprehensive stand-alone goal on gender equality, with a variety of targets and indicators, to go well beyond the purview of the original Millennium Development Goals. These would commit national Governments to implementing proactive policies to break down the underlying structures of discrimination and ensure robust monitoring of progress and accountability for outcomes that directly benefit women. Much of the ensuing discussion among participants revolved around the proposed new goal and its various elements.

32. In the view of UN-Women, a stand-alone goal is needed for four reasons. First, it is needed to pursue the considerable amount of unfinished business in terms of the Millennium Development Goals, particularly around Goal 5 on improving maternal health. Second, it is needed to directly address the structural discriminatory constraints on equality in general as they affect women's empowerment and women's rights. The third relates to the investment in gender equality, as through girls' education, which is well known to be one of the best investments that a country can make for its own development. Fourth, a stand-alone goal is needed in order to focus policy action, parliaments and societies on truly addressing the underlying constraints.

33. The majority of participants agreed that a stand-alone goal is needed first and foremost in order to ensure political commitment to the advancement of women. If women's issues were only spread across several sustainable development goals, that focus would be lacking. A specific goal is perfectly compatible with gender mainstreaming, to which countries are already committed on the basis of the

conventions and other instruments that they have signed and ratified. The stand-alone goal is needed to sharpen the focus on a set of issues that need to be addressed in the most varied areas.

34. Another reason for establishing a stand-alone goal is to mobilize political will, which will in turn mobilize resources, thus helping to reverse the trend of chronic underfunding of gender-related policies. This is no simple matter in the current post-crisis time of global austerity, which has disproportionately impacted women. In many countries, in times of financial austerity, cuts are made first in the public sector, where women are largely employed. In addition, women around the world are often in vulnerable employment, lacking proper social protection, which is also cut in difficult financial times. Between 2011 and 2012-2013, the amount of official development assistance (ODA) invested in women's issues and gender equality dropped by 20 per cent. Furthermore, in countries embroiled in conflict, money that might have been invested in women's empowerment is being spent instead to fight terrorism and hostilities. While a stand-alone goal would be able to focus on funding, there is still a long way to go towards turning the situation around, despite ample evidence showing that investment in women's empowerment yields huge economic returns.

35. A contrary view that some participants expressed was that a stand-alone goal was not needed, because women's issues will inevitably touch on all aspects of a sustainable development agenda. Women make up 50 per cent of the world's population. The face of poverty is more likely to be female than male. Hence, for the sustainable development agenda to be about people, women's issues and gender issues have to be cross-cutting. From this perspective, having a stand-alone goal risks isolating gender issues from the broader development agenda. Some participants felt that it was too early to be considering a stand-alone goal, as there is not yet agreement on what it should focus. It would be preferable to integrate gender goals across the development spectrum. For example, consensus seems to be crystallizing on some goals in the area of health, which would definitely be one of the areas where women's issues can be addressed. Issues of education can also be considered as part of the unfinished agenda of the Millennium Development Goals, and targets can be built pertaining specifically to women and/or girls. The same could be said about questions relating to participation in decision-making.

36. Another view was that there should indeed be a stand-alone goal among the new sustainable development goals which would deal essentially with violence against women, but that gender equality should be a cross-cutting component of all aspects of development. Violence against women, too, should be considered a cross-cutting issue and not merely a women's problem. In fact, it is a problem for society as a whole on its path to development. Mainstreaming gender throughout the sustainable development goals and development policy in general is another way to nurture harmony between the sexes, which in turn supports harmony between cultures and with nature. The pursuit of harmony in society is consistent with the pursuit of well-being, and should not be seen as secondary to economic growth.

37. It was observed that the most successful Millennium Development Goals have been the relatively uncontroversial ones: there is wide consensus that poverty must be reduced and that girls should be educated. Whether there is wide consensus that real gender equality is desirable is more doubtful. A strong gender-specific goal will help affirm that commitment in no uncertain terms. In fact, many participants felt

that a broad political consensus does exist on gender equality. They pointed to the United Nations agreements adopted, e.g., the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women[a] and similar instruments. However, there is certainly work to be done in dealing with some of the cultural issues and stereotypes generated in society, some of which have deep historical roots. The advances made at the policy and legislative levels have in many cases not dealt with the underlying cultural and other factors.

38. Some delegates asked whether there is now a general sense that, after several years when it seemed as if women's rights were surging forward in the global agenda and, when there was much excitement centred around the series of related global conferences, progress has stalled. In some thematic areas such as those considered in Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security and, in the Beijing Platform for Action,[b] it seems that countries have actually stagnated or have maybe even retreated. If there is general agreement that such a situation obtains, is there a way to regain momentum? It was suggested that in the case of discussions in forums where gender is the/or a main issue, such as the Commission on the Status of Women and the Third Committee of the General Assembly, there is a good level of enthusiasm and commitment. The problem arises in other, less directly related forums, and in discussions of other issues that appear less directly related to women. Such situations show a need for more gender awareness on the part of experts and delegates of Member States and a greater commitment to mainstreaming gender.

39. Gender equality of course is an issue involving both men and women, and needs therefore to be addressed across the board. This will involve convincing men that gender equality would not entail a loss for them, but a gain for society as a whole. Men need to be sensitized to the particular concerns of women and to be included in crafting the solutions that will take those needs into account. Violence against women, for example, will not be eliminated unless it is addressed jointly by men and women, because of the role of men in perpetrating it. Indeed, the support of men may be vital to the advancement of women. In the Plurinational State of Bolivia, for example, the various structural and regulatory changes to that end would not have been possible without the support of male politicians.

40. A related issue is how men are faring in society. Part of the task of those working on gender issues will be to look also at how men are dealing, for example, with situations in which more university graduates are female rather than male and more women are competing for jobs traditionally held by males. Policies for gender equality may not always result in a win-win scenario for both men and women. When this occurs, it needs to be acknowledged and appropriate action taken to help men cope and find a solution to their predicament.

41. In a situation of pure equality, women will compete head to head with men for whatever they are seeking, and given finite resources and a finite number of jobs, men may well end up with less than they were used to in the past. It has to be recognized, however, that men will strongly resist any perceived loss of power or possessions. A less contentious approach may be one of "complementarity", entailing women's taking their place alongside men, on equal terms, but not

[a] United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1249, No. 20378.

[b] *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

venturing into men's territory. Most participants considered that the correct approach is to strive for true equality, while a minority suggested that in societies of great cultural and economic diversity, complementarity helps in achieving goals of harmony, through a celebration of people's differences.

42. A more fundamental question discussed was whether the needs of women across the world, who live in such varied cultural contexts, can really be generalized, and whether it is possible to craft goals and targets that are as applicable to women in the countries that stand out in terms of gender equality, as they are to countries that are much more unequal. Participants suggested, however, that most gender goals are universal. All countries have women, with issues that are applicable more or less across the board, to varying degrees — for example, elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls, women's participation in political decision-making, access to economic activities such as property and inheritance rights, and sexual and reproductive rights and reproductive health. All of those issues are common to all countries to some degree or another. If these elements were incorporated into a stand-alone goal, they could be made globally applicable.

43. At the same time, caution was expressed about regarding all societies as homogeneous. The image and the standing of women, for example, vary from country to country and from region to region. Therefore, Governments will always need some latitude in terms of how they go about implementing a universal gender goal.

> The challenge we have is to choose and prioritize targets that will really mean a fundamental change in women's lives.
>
> John Hendra
> Deputy Executive Director for Policy and Programme, UN-Women

44. One of the problems associated with the Millennium Development Goals is that they did not comprehensively cover violence against women, largely because of the perceived difficulty of properly measuring and benchmarking this issue. There is much more to be done. Violence against women includes not only sexual violence and rape, but also trafficking, sexual slavery and prostitution. As long as there are still men who think they can buy a woman because she is poor, the world has far to go before genuine equality is achieved. International bodies should make clear-cut declarations in respect of these crimes, as should parliaments, and with the full force of the law.

> In the Plurinational State of Bolivia, if any region suffers inordinately high levels of violence against women, it can declare an emergency, comparable to a natural disaster. This releases intensive resources to attack the problem until it is brought under control.
>
> Gabriela Montaño
> President of the Senate, Plurinational State of Bolivia

45. Work on violence against women should also encompass the prevention aspect. There is a great deal of evidence indicating that the greater the number of women judges, and the greater number of women in the police forces, the lower the level of violence against women. It will also be very important to examine the root causes of violence, which may include socioeconomic status and poverty, alcohol and drugs; in the case of sexual violence, however, they are associated overwhelmingly with a sense of men's sexual entitlement, and impunity.

46. If there is consensus that violence against women should be a significant part of any stand-alone gender goal, and given the past difficulty in measuring or tracking it, there will be a need to define targets as well as indicators to measure progress. This should be based on best practices emanating from a variety of different societies.

47. Indeed, indicators are needed in all aspects of women's empowerment, and the efforts of UN-Women and other bodies are to be welcomed. The commitment of countries to advancing the women's agenda can be measured by the extent to which they adopt and use such indicators. For example, increases in women's access to credit or landownership are easy to measure. Countries need to reach consensus not only on objectives but also on the indicators that will make it possible to track progress.

48. The Millennium Development Goals did not contain a specific reproductive health and rights target, although it was embedded within other targets. This raises the question how reproductive health and rights will be handled in the context of a new set of sustainable development goals. As an absolutely crucial component of women's well-being, sexual and reproductive health and rights would have to be not only part of a stand-alone goal, but, at the same time, also part and parcel of a cross-cutting approach, notably through their inclusion in any goal on health. Those rights are seen as a fundamental part of ensuring women's access to and control over resources, giving them all relevant options concerning how they choose to live their lives. Clearly, this issue is politically sensitive in some parts of the world; however, it is fundamental to the realization of women's human rights and to gender equality.

49. One question to be considered is whether representation — the number of women in parliament — should be part of a stand-alone goal in order to encourage the accession of greater numbers of women to membership in parliament. There is strong evidence that where women parliamentarians are more numerous, more attention is paid to issues of concern to women, including contraception, the right to abortion, education, health, violence and vocational training.

50. The hearing examined, from a practical perspective, areas of the sustainable development goals architecture where gender concerns have been ignored, and where development has fallen short because the gender component has been ignored. For example, while it is true that advances — and in some countries very large advances — have been made at the parliamentary level, women are still underrepresented at the local and municipal levels. Similarly, there is still a "glass ceiling" to women's advancement: international organizations tend not to appoint women to the highest levels, and men still dominate in the senior echelons in finance, banking and business.

51. The question was raised why, when women account for about half of the electorate, and a good number of them are on the ballot, disproportionate numbers

of men are still elected. It was obvious that women voters do not necessarily vote for women. Where that was the case, it was partly the duty of open-minded men to overcome women's reluctance to vote for other women. Some disagreed with the basic premise, citing examples to the contrary from their country's experience.

52. In general, there was a level of frustration among participants — men as well as women — about the gap between the high-flown language on women's rights issues and on-the-ground implementation, and between the enthusiastic consensus in meetings such as the present one and the obstacles encountered in the wider world. This is where parliamentarians have a critical role to play, which is to enact legislation and monitor its implementation. On the face of it, this seems a fairly simple way of translating obligations into practice, but of course political will needs to be present, and it is in this area, unfortunately, that progress seems to be encountering obstacles.

53. While countries are working on the post-2015 development agenda, i.e., the sustainable development goals, they should not forget the obligations that are already on the table, which are still binding. One issue is thus how the new goals can facilitate implementation of commitments that have already been made or offset what is lacking in terms of the implementation of those obligations.

54. Whether in the end the United Nations will establish a stand-alone goal or take a cross-cutting approach, or both, there are still many issues that will have to be covered in addition to violence, health and participation in decision-making. For example, there is the question of helping working women balance the disparate claims of professional advancement and their responsibilities in the home. Another issue yet to be resolved is that of equal pay for equal work. All of these issues will need to be based on objective and realistic data and indicators disaggregated by sex, income and by other factors, and every effort must be made to ensure that they are truly integrated into all three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, environmental and social.

55. The gender component of the new sustainable development goals, however configured, will truly advance only if root causes of inequality and discrimination are addressed, including power relations and patterns of socialization. Changing some of the more traditional attitudes and rethinking the concept of masculinity will also be crucial. It will be necessary for the sustainable development goals, like the Millennium Development Goals, to be easy to articulate so as to enable them to quickly gain traction, attracting the attention of policymakers and the public at large.

Main conclusions

- In the context of the new sustainable development goals, gender equality would be best advanced as a stand-alone goal, which would focus the attention of populations and Governments on the urgency of gender equality in its own right, and not just as an enabler of development. Establishing this goal would also help complete the unfinished work of the Millennium Development Goals.
- At the same time, gender considerations need to be disseminated across the whole range of development goals so as to eliminate the risk of isolating

gender from other development issues: gender mainstreaming is good for women and for the development agenda as a whole.

- Development work on gender equality and women's empowerment must be based on a human rights approach. The use of sex-disaggregated data, much of which needs to be collected more proactively, should supplement this approach. Violence against women, in particular, should head the list of issues to be tackled within the context of a new gender goal.

- Difficulties will arise in making progress on these issues, owing to the cultural differences in respect of the standing and view of women in various countries. However, women's issues and concerns, such as violence and sexual and reproductive health, are universal. The post-2015 development agenda in this area must be based on the commitments arising out of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence against Women, filling the gaps in those previous commitments.

Session III: Democratic governance for sustainable development: what place among the new goals?

> We are calling for a fundamental shift — to recognize peace and good governance as core elements of well-being, not an optional extra.
>
> Report of the United Nations Secretary-General's High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda

56. A key message of the Quito communiqué was that democratic governance is both an end and a means to sustainable development and that, as such, it ought to feature strongly among the new sustainable development goals as a stand-alone goal. Furthermore, and in line with the focus of the Secretary-General's High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, the parliamentarians meeting in Quito recognized the interrelationship between democratic governance and well-being. The discussion was designed to further flesh out key elements of democratic governance and its linkages to sustainable development. It also offered an opportunity to underscore the importance of democratic governance as a more comprehensive concept than governance alone.

57. As several participants noted, democratic governance depends on more than just effective Governments which can provide quality services to their people. The concept has its basis in the question of legitimacy of those who govern and their decisions, which in turn comes from trust in politics and public institutions. Democracy and well-functioning institutions depend on elections that are free and fair, with the engagement of political parties in a context of media freedom.

58. Equally important is that people feel that it is relevant to go to the polls, seek quality of government and ask for accountability and legitimacy. Parliaments have a very important role to play in communicating what voters want from government, the judiciary, the media and the political parties, as representatives of the people. This means that parliamentarians have to think about how they can lead, prioritize, organize and be held to account in a world where people expect them to do more rather than less.

> Politics is not only for solving problems, it's also for grasping opportunities.
>
> Gunilla Carlsson
> Former member of the United Nations Secretary-General's High-level Panel,
> Former Minister of Development Cooperation of Sweden

59. The present-day broad access to information means that citizens have higher expectations: not only of basic human rights, but also of the right to participate, at both the national and global levels. Many participants spoke to the difficulty in managing these expectations. Globalization and digitalization have inevitably brought us together, so that in many countries and regions, people are today discussing the same issues. We know, too, that the existing multilateral system is not delivering the results needed in a world that is truly globalized. For several participants, the expanding influence of transnational corporations as global economic actors calls for greater global political governance able to tackle issues such as injustice, poverty and unsustainability — which are common to almost every country in the world.

60. The post-Millennium Development Goals process must aim at ending poverty in our time, but this aim must be achieved in acknowledgement of the fact that our resources are finite and ever dwindling. The work of poverty elimination in a context of sustainability cannot be conducted outside a framework of democratic governance, and without institutions that are able to deliver effective policy solutions. Virtually all comments from participants supported the view that democratic governance is vital for long-lasting, equitable and sustainable economic development. It must be a cross-cutting component of all post-2015 goals. Some of its key elements will include parliamentary oversight consistent with the division of powers between branches of government, effective protection of rights of vulnerable segments of society, genuine rights to information, enhanced professionalism and accountability of the security forces, and an independent judicial system affordable by all. It must also include a process of ongoing review and improvement of the services provided by government, such as health, education and justice, and investment in the infrastructure of the country.

> There has been too artificial a line between national and international; in today's world the global problems are also national and even local.
>
> Jan Eliasson
> Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations

61. If Governments are to deal with the problems at home, they need to be open to the outside world, and take the international dimension into account. Here, parliaments have a crucially important role to play in explaining to their constituents that while there may be problems in their country, the country cannot solve them alone, without taking into account the reality beyond their borders — without eliminating that false line between the national and the international.

> We recently had a vote in which people were to decide whether they should henceforth have six weeks of vacation per year. Who in the world would be against more vacation ... but the Swiss voted against it. More vacation was very appealing, but the voters concluded that it would not be a responsible decision in terms of the national interest.
>
> Paul Seger
> Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations

62. Underpinning democratic governance must be a very strong sense of ownership of the country, derived from active participation but also from a well-informed citizenry. In this way, people feel that they have a stake in the whole society. There is a strong link between people's responsibility for the common good and democracy, which parliamentarians must help nurture: a healthy democracy would normally see people make decisions with the best interest of their community or country in mind. Examples of this can be found in countries as different in levels of development and political culture as Switzerland and Costa Rica.

> When Costa Rica became independent, it established a strong commitment to education. There was also a firm belief in solidarity, which enabled social security reforms, including establishment of a labour code and the national health system. The country has a very dynamic electoral system that is legitimate in the eyes of the populace, a judicial system with a high degree of independence and honesty, and a constitution providing safeguards for the individual and social rights of people.
>
> Ambassador Eduardo Ulibarri
> Permanent Representative of Costa Rica to the United Nations

63. Several interventions pointed out that a key variable in the politics of certain countries is corruption, which is one of the main factors eroding democratic governance and people's trust in institutions. Corruption scandals shake the very foundations of a country's institutions, jeopardizing their credibility and that of the political system. On the other hand, success in sentencing corrupt officials to jail will in fact raise the credibility of the judicial system.

> Four military dictators have seized power in Pakistan and all have been defeated by massive popular movements. Each dictatorial era has ended with the restoration of democracy, while all the mass movements of resistance to autocracy have been completely non-violent.
>
> Senator Aitzaz Ahsan
> Pakistan

64. The post-2015 development agenda should be developed on the basis of a people-centred approach. It should encompass human rights parameters, cutting across social, economic and environmental dimensions. Democratic governance should be based on the key elements of participation, transparency and accountability, and should lead to positive outcomes for development such as a

shrinking of inequalities. The chaos reigning in many aspects of life in our communities today is due to a lack of proper leadership in our system of government. Another problem is the erosion of safety nets and other public goods which, beyond their immediate utility, also help generate a common bond among the people as well as a sense of citizenship. Universal health care accessible to all, for example, can have the supplementary benefits of contributing to a better distribution of wealth while enabling people to participate more actively in the political process.

> True leaders are concerned with making history, not money.
>
> Parliamentarian from Suriname

65. Democracy should in essence be participatory, but, in many instances, it is distorted by self-centredness and greed, tempting leaders to stray from the interests of their communities. Because of this, the global family lacks basic values such as solidarity and social service. Parliamentarians must be champions of bringing these values back into politics.

66. Trust in government, political stability and accountability are deeply intertwined and are key determinants of democratic governance. If political, economic or social stability are absent from a country, governance becomes commensurately harder. Meanwhile, if, generally, there is no trust in government and its institutions, one overriding reason may be their failure to provide the services for which they are responsible. For a political system to be trusted, it has to be accountable. Accountability to a great extent arises out of a transparent society with vibrant public opinion and free media, and with people able to access the resources that will empower them to denounce what they consider to be wrong.

67. Several interventions noted that it is not only on the national level that accountability and trust are needed, but also internationally. One factor hindering trust between nations is a new trend towards nationalism, sometimes spilling over into xenophobia, and heightened appeals to the concept of sovereignty. This kind of backlash may arise from what are considered to be the negative effects of globalization, which, if this is the case, makes it difficult for States to reach out to each other and make the compromises that are necessary to finding global solutions.

68. A further difficulty is the impact of money on politics. Politicians who are swayed by special commercial interests and parliamentarians who are elected because poor people have been bribed to vote a certain way do not have the legitimacy to combat corruption. One partial remedy, found in certain constitutions, is the funding of political campaigns and elections exclusively by the State, with outside contributions banned.

69. Where the government is not accountable or completely mistrusted, it becomes very difficult to convince people that they should participate in elections, which leads to a crisis of democracy. However, even some countries that are genuinely democratic are seeing voter fatigue, with dwindling participation levels and a lack of political interest. This may be for either of two totally opposed reasons: either people have given up hope that an elected government will change their lives for the better, or alternatively, they have grown complacent that the government has everything under control and will continue to deliver the same levels of prosperity and security.

70. Of particular concern for many participants was the absence of youth from the electoral process. Generally, political activity is in the hands of the middle-aged and older generations, which will not be around to see the impact of their decisions or lack thereof today. Youth must be brought in to gather the experience that they will need when they ultimately take over. Young people face a huge distraction from civic duty: involvement in social media and similar self-centred pursuits, which claim a large expenditure of time; but these should not be an alternative to democratic participation. Young people's vision and passion must be harnessed in the service of democratic change.

71. Ideas abound on enhancing governance. One is that all newborns, throughout the world, should be issued a birth certificate, a document attesting to their existence and thus to their right to go to school, to receive health care, to vote and to open a bank account. Another is simply to reduce the voting age, so as to draw young people into the democratic system before they can grow weary of it.

72. In an effort to strengthen democratic governance, some countries have experimented with decentralizing government from the capital to some other level like the provincial or the regional. This may provide opportunities for those in power to be closer to their constituents' concerns, although some participants cautioned that the change has to be made with care, so as to prevent simple replication of instances of bad centralized governance at lower levels.

73. A citizen participatory budget process such as exists in the Republic of Korea gives people the opportunity, through public hearings and Internet surveys, to express views on all budget issues at the local government level. Similar mechanisms can be established to enable citizens to express their views on each new project that the government proposes to undertake and on how they will be impacted by the project. Devolution to local authorities can also have a positive impact on growth, trade and employment, as has been seen in Brazil.

74. Sound laws relating to communications media, information and freedom of speech are also a critical component of governance. Parliaments have to enact laws on access to public information that truly oblige State institutions to be both accountable and open to the demands of the population in that area. Far from seeking to regulate and control the media, they should ensure that they are as independent of outside influence as possible, while at the same time making provisions for ensuring responsible reporting. In a democratic society, those in power have to be open to criticism, which is part of the function of the communications media.

75. While there is clearly a groundswell of support for democratic governance from politicians around the world, some delegates expressed concern about some reluctance at the United Nations to include governance in the development agenda. However, that resistance is not widespread; there are many countries that favour the inclusion of democratic governance either as a sustainable development goal or as a condition underlying many of the specific goals that will emerge. Those Member States that are sceptical about the concept of democratic governance base their thinking on two considerations. First, some of them feel that the inclusion of such a goal might open the door to intervention in their national sovereignty. Second, many countries remain uncomfortable with the idea of subjecting themselves to a constant process of accountability both to their own populations and to the international community.

76. To overcome those concerns, a number of Member States must be convinced that democratic governance will ultimately work in their favour, as it builds trust and political stability. The United Nations Millennium Declaration of 2000[c] makes specific mention of the importance of good governance in achieving the various Millennium Development Goals. Therefore, the role of good governance as a facilitator and an enabler of development goals has already been recognized. Perhaps the reason why democratic governance was not made a goal in itself in 2000 was because the world did not feel comfortable with the concept and had doubts about how — if at all — it could be monitored. However, over the years, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, in particular, has developed some expertise and tools which will enable some tracking of progress with regard to democratic governance.

Main conclusions

- A specific goal on democratic governance for inclusion among the future sustainable development goals would improve government decisions on sustainable development while also affirming the centrality of democratic governance principles as key aspects of well-being. Parliaments should be encouraged to adopt resolutions or motions in support of such a goal and as a way of bringing their weight to bear in the current debate about the sustainable development goals.
- Democratic governance is fundamental to earning citizens' trust in the government and its institutions. One of the factors most corrosive to trust is corruption.
- Free and fair elections are a primary building block of any system of democratic governance. It is essential to maintain or enhance voter participation, particularly among young people, thus building trust.
- With the corporate private sector now global in scope, stronger political governance at the global level is also needed to tackle the issues that are not being addressed, such as injustice, poverty and unsustainable growth.
- Democratic governance can be enhanced in many ways, including by ensuring that elections are untainted by donations from special interests, by providing for innovative consultative mechanisms and by ensuring an unfettered media environment.
- Democratic governance has in the past been considered difficult to measure. However, several new approaches have been developed in recent years, including by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, to help define and track progress. Progress on this front should make it easier for a stand-alone goal to be defined.

[c] General Assembly resolution 55/2.

Session IV: Parliaments and the new post-2015 agenda: getting ready for implementation

> Implementation of the internationally agreed development goals brings parliaments centre stage. They can play a pivotal role in promoting greater national ownership of development strategies and programmes, in the light of the Sustainable Development Goals. The role of parliaments in implementation is multi-pronged, contributing to the process in many different ways.
>
> Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury
> Speaker of Parliament, Bangladesh

77. Drawing lessons from the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and the role that parliaments have been able to play thus far, this session discussed how parliaments can begin to prepare for a new set of sustainable development goals as constituting a universal agenda engaging both developed and developing countries.

78. The race to achieve the Millennium Development Goals is not over: there are still two years to go, and with the Goals now high in the agenda in numerous countries around the world, the opportunities are manifold for achieving as much as possible between now and December 2015. Parliamentarians and Governments need to make serious plans with respect to how they are going to use this time. In the health sector, for instance, while some countries have succeeded in lowering HIV prevalence, others have not. Similarly, some countries have succeeded in the fight against tuberculosis, while others have not. Learning the lessons from these successes or failures will be a major task in the next two years.

79. The reasons for inadequate progress on the Millennium Development Goals are many, including some climate change-related disasters, outbreaks of conflict, a failure by some of the wealthier countries to live up to their commitment of allocating 0.7 per cent of GDP to ODA, priority not given in many countries to the Millennium Development Goals and a skewed budget allocation to military expenditures rather than to development. However, one overriding factor is that awareness of the Millennium Development Goals among parliamentarians in some countries did not really take hold until about one third of the way through their 15-year time frame. Consequently, regular monitoring of the Millennium Development Goals process got fully under way relatively late in the process. If it had been undertaken much earlier, the results by now would be better. To avoid falling into the same traps with the sustainable development goals, parliamentarians need to be aware of them from the very start, and to be prepared to monitor their implementation. Indeed, knowledge of the sustainable development goals within parliaments as institutions is necessary, since individual parliamentarians come and go with every election.

80. Parliaments can pinpoint the weaknesses in implementation and attainment of the Millennium Development Goals, delving into the root causes so as to ensure better alignment with national priorities. Fostering close ties with government is critical, because it is only through this interaction that the priorities that are so important at the national level, reflecting the aspirations of the people, can actually

be brought into the process. Policy harmonization, coordination and mutual accountability can all be promoted by parliaments, which constitute the forum for facilitating debate on all development issues. As peoples' representatives, parliamentarians can bring to the floor the vital issues that affect the poor, the vulnerable and the marginalized. They can thus play a vital role in drawing up informed development plans on the basis of the real priorities.

81. On the positive side, it should also be recognized that had it not been for the Millennium Development Goals, the world would not have entered into a unique global partnership that has created a common currency across Governments, in the North and South, and with other stakeholders such as civil society and the private sector. Nor would the world have seen such a scaling up of efforts in the fields of education, health, and safe water supplies, among many others. Indeed, many developing countries will have achieved some or most of the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 — not all countries, and not all the Millennium Development Goals, but enough to have transformed the development landscape. The challenge going forward is how to complete the unfinished business of the Millennium Development Goals, in addition to crafting a more expanded agenda that combines poverty eradication with sustainable development.

82. Another task for parliamentarians relates to shaping the new global development agenda, so that it is commensurate with the level of ambition required to take on the major primary needs of our time. As the result of an unprecedented effort by the United Nations to obtain the views of people all over the world, more than a million voices have already been heard, and the loud and clear message was not only to put poverty eradication and sustainable development at the centre of the agenda but also to bring issues into it that were not sufficiently addressed by the Millennium Development Goals, including democratic governance, peace and freedom from fear and violence, and prospects for employment, particularly for youth.

83. While the United Nations has seen very strong engagement by parliaments at the national level, this needs to be deepened further. The pressure needs to be kept up in order to counter the temptation to lower ambition, dodge the difficult issues or go for lowest common denominators, which otherwise will start to seep into the negotiations among Member States. Furthermore, to make sustainable development work, a new way of working for Governments all over the world is needed, namely, through better integrating the social, economic and environmental pillars of sustainable development in all policy areas and sectors. Parliaments can play a crucial role in forcing that integration, by ensuring that decisions laws and budgets truly take into consideration the three dimensions.

> We realize that robust accountability will be central to effective and timely realization of sustainable development goals. You have a particularly important role to play in this regard.
>
> Ambassador Néstor Osorio
> President of the Economic and Social Council

84. Development goals have often been set at the United Nations with a top-down or sectoral approach, treating issues in a fragmented manner. However,

parliamentarians can reshape them within the context of a bottom-up process, by bringing in the grass-roots stakeholders, thereby addressing one of the weaknesses of the Millennium Development Goals process and at the same time laying the groundwork for a more effective set of sustainable development goals.

85. Regarding implementation, an important aspect is national ownership of the sustainable development goals, which has to be achieved through the mandated representatives of the people. This is especially true in consideration of the current global agenda, with a time span from 10 to 15-20 years. The executive branch has a very short-term vision, based on what needs to be done over a five- or four-year term, whereas parliamentarians can add value by taking a longer perspective. Another area where parliamentarians can add value is that of the quality of outcomes. There are discrepancies and inequalities within countries, which only parliamentarians can point out. Outcomes should not be measured in terms simply of how many students are enrolled in schools, or how many hospital beds are available: equally important is the quality of education in the schools and or the quality of health care in the hospitals.

86. On implementation, parliamentarians can play a further crucial role in the integration of sustainable development both vertically among local or provincial assemblies and national assemblies and horizontally among regions or provinces. There should be coordination at all levels, not only locally, regionally and globally, but also at the corporate level and with the United Nations. Within parliament proper, coordination, possibly through a dedicated structure, is needed to facilitate overall monitoring and institutionalization of the new agenda. One obstacle to integration and coordination is a lack of data, making it difficult for countries and regions to monitor or calculate where they stand vis-à-vis the various development goals. Methods for collecting and interpreting data need to be harmonized, with uniform information management systems in place to eliminate the problems of information shortage which plagued the early efforts of the Millennium Development Goals process.

87. Some countries have, at differing levels, information-gathering systems that not only measure GDP but also incorporate alternative indicators such as education, health, well-being and happiness. As was discussed earlier in the hearing, the fact that economic growth does not necessarily translate into the well-being or prosperity that is the ultimate objective of development makes other components of sustainable development all the more important, such as how to halt the widening gap between rich and poor, prevent discrimination and create social cohesion and inclusion. Countries also have plans to expand that more comprehensive type of measurement system to different political and administrative levels. These systems will be important in determining what resources are genuinely needed both to finish the Millennium Development Goals process and to start off the pursuit of the sustainable development goals.

88. The budget is an essential tool for attaining any development goal, and it is part of parliament's duty to scrutinize what resources are being allocated to that end, and whether they are being correctly used. If parliamentarians lack the expertise to monitor and analyse budgets, they should pursue opportunities to obtain such expertise or seek guidance from more experienced colleagues. Various countries have established budget monitoring frameworks to assist parliamentarians in this task. A related task is to convince the public and the government that it is necessary

for the country to have a budget for pursuing development goals. This is not an easy message to convey in times of financial crisis and austerity. An early victim of such times is the international aid budget, making it all the more urgent to convey the message that the crisis has not lessened the needs of the recipient countries.

> Control of the public purse gives parliaments tremendous power to affect development outcomes. In Uganda, for example, the Parliament repeatedly pointed out to the Government that with the inadequate funding allocated to the health sector, the country would never achieve MDGs 4 and 5. In the fifth year of this confrontation, Parliament decided that enough was enough, and refused to pass the budget. The result was a stand-off that lasted for three weeks, after which the Government withdrew the budget and presented a new one with a huge increase for the health area.
>
> Anders B. Johnsson
> Secretary-General, Inter-Parliamentary Union

89. Achieving the various development goals will take additional resources. Indeed, some delegates even pointed out that it was partly their countries' dependence on foreign aid that had impeded the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. Much more important is to ensure that Governments mobilize their own resources for development. One initiative on the European level has been to levy a tax on transnational financial transactions and to use the proceeds for development purposes. So far 12 of the 28 European Union member States have signed on to the scheme, while efforts are being made to convince other countries to adopt it, too. Other suggestions have been to introduce measures to combat illicit flows of money and international fraud, appropriating the proceeds for international aid, and to appeal to the oil-producing nations to help their less fortunate neighbours in the developing world.

90. Whereas the Millennium Development Goals were designed to benefit countries in development, the new sustainable development agenda will apply to all countries, both developing and developed. It is perhaps not abundantly clear in the developed world that the North is no longer just a "donor", but very much an actor and a partner in development cooperation. To cite just one difference from the past, this means that where the developed countries are providing assistance, they should no longer be imposing conditionalities in a peremptory or paternalistic manner. Rather, where they see areas in developing countries that need to be upgraded, such as those related to human rights or women's empowerment, they should be offering assistance to do so in a spirit of dialogue and partnership.

91. Parliamentarians should be conveying the message that the noble goals of human development have not yet been fulfilled. There is still poverty in the world, not every child can go to school, and there is a long way to go towards the achieving of women's empowerment, among many deficits. The message should also be that the whole question of sustainable development does not concern only the developing countries, but is also highly relevant to the developed ones, the wealthiest of which still experience problems of poverty, hunger and homelessness. Along the same lines, the question of sustainability concerns the whole world, as is best illustrated by climate change, biodiversity loss and other pressing

environmental challenges. It is very important that parliamentarians also make their electorates aware of the motives underlying the pursuit of these development goals, which can be a surprisingly difficult task in the wealthy countries.

> It's very difficult to talk about children in need of education, in a society where every child goes to school as a matter of course. It is not easy to advocate for the empowerment of women, in a society where all women think they are emancipated. But it is the duty as a parliamentarian to raise awareness of a world outside the borders of one's own prosperous country.
>
> Senator Fauzaya Talhaoui
> Belgium

92. Implementing the new goals will require a more inclusive dialogue between parliaments and civil society. The trade unions, the environmental movement, the women's movement and, in fact, the whole of civil society will need to support parliamentarians in their interaction with public opinion and the government. However, it is perhaps even more important that parliamentarians call upon civil society for that support, by making its members aware of what the country is trying to do, and why. To this end, almost everywhere, parliamentary debates will need to be more open and accessible to the public.

93. A relatively new aspect is the role of social media in parliamentary activities. Increasingly, parliamentarians are using social media to send information about their work to their myriad contacts, reaching far more people than they would using traditional methods. The use of modern communications media should be a two-way street: some countries have made provisions whereby citizens have the right to participate in the legislative process, by providing suggestions, opinions, criticism and alternative proposals. The experiment has been a huge step forward for political inclusion.

94. With so much work to be contemplated, some parliaments have already established working groups and task forces on the sustainable development goals. The intention is to be ready to move much faster than was the case with the Millennium Development Goals.

95. Many suggestions were made in the hearing on what areas the future development goals should cover. The need was stressed for goals on stability, energy supplies and persons with disabilities. Security issues should also be considered. How can any development be ensured when many developing countries are faced with recurrent military crises leading to unimaginable humanitarian catastrophes? Armed conflict, it was noted, can also open the door to the illegal exploitation of natural resources by foreign multinationals.

96. The need to deal with a perilous security situation deprives legitimate Governments of the resources needed to finance development activities such as building decent hospitals and effective schools, improving the life of the population and creating sustainable employment, as the jobs created through illegal exploitation are but ephemeral.

97. What gives us hope for the future is that, whereas the Millennium Development Goals were developed behind closed doors by technocrats gathered at the United Nations, the post-2015 development agenda is being widely and openly negotiated and discussed, and is emerging through a process of consensus-building around the world. It is true that large-scale awareness-raising has to be undertaken, but the world is in a much better position to embark on the new development adventure than it was in 2001.

98. The essence of the goals of the post-2015 development agenda is to find a safe operating space where all countries can pursue prosperity for all while both respecting the planetary boundaries and comprehensively meeting basic human needs and fulfilling human rights. Knowledge and innovation can take us a long way down that road, but the problem today is that too much of innovation is in areas where it can only make the problems worse. Humankind is finding innovative ways to extract more resources ever more rapidly and deplete the ecosystems even more thoroughly than before. It is only if we can prioritize the kind of innovation that will actually solve our problems that innovation will become a friend of humanity for the future, and not just a means of making profits.

99. The biggest challenge facing the post-2015 development agenda will therefore be to transform a mindset at the national level that is geared towards the maximization of national advantages at the expense of others. Admittedly, this approach has worked quite well so far for many countries. However, humankind has reached the point where this way of looking at the world is at odds with the fact of rapidly rising shared vulnerability, unmet human needs and unsustainable consumption patterns. Only when political leaders, members of parliament and the public at large make the required cognitive shift, from a mindset of grasping at the national advantage in the short term to one of global collaboration to solve shared challenges, to deal with vulnerability, and thereby actually to advance national interest, will this agenda work.

> If we come up with a post-2015 agenda that has appealing and praiseworthy goals, but the mindset stays the same, the problems will not be solved.
>
> Olav Kjørven
> Assistant Secretary-General, Director of Bureau for Development Policy
> United Nations Development Programme

Main conclusions

- Parliamentarians must continue to push for the conclusion of the Millennium Development Goals process, which still has two years to run, as the post-2015 development agenda will need to build on those goals. At the same time, there is a need as well as an opportunity for parliamentarians to be directly involved in the framing of the new agenda and attendant sustainable development goals. That will strengthen national ownership of the agenda and set the stage for effective implementation afterwards.
- As was the case for the Millennium Development Goals, the success of the sustainable development goals will depend on close monitoring by

parliaments. This includes participating in the design of national strategies for sustainable development and ensuring that national budgets are aligned with the new agenda. A dedicated monitoring structure may be needed in parliaments to ensure that the new goals are institutionalized.

- Achieving sustainable development will continue to depend most critically on the integration of economic, social and environmental policies at all levels. Parliamentarians need to support this effort, while also helping to extend the policy horizon to the long term and well beyond the next election.

- Parliamentarians also have a unique role to play in rallying public opinion around national development goals as well as resources for development. Part of the task, in the developed world, will be to persuade electorates that the sustainable development goals very much involve them as well.

- Parliamentarians should increase their participation in the work of the United Nations, which has been increasingly open to a wide range of stakeholders. The inaugurating post-2015 development agenda should offer an opportunity for increasing such interaction and for inaugurating a new era in the relations between the United Nations and parliaments.

Annex II

List of panellists and moderators

The format of the 2013 parliamentary hearing was entirely in interview style. Each panel was composed of high-level representatives and parliamentarians, who were interviewed by a renowned journalist or author. Following the initial interview (50-60 minutes long), the floor was opened for questions or comments from participants. Sessions I and III were preceded by a keynote speech.

Session I examined the topic of a new economic model for sustainable development and the path towards well-being. Following a keynote address by Professor Tim Jackson, University of Surrey, United Kingdom, author of *Prosperity without Growth*, the subject was discussed by Ambassador Macharia Kamau, Permanent Representative of Kenya to the United Nations, Co-chair of the Open Working Group of the General Assembly on the Sustainable Development Goals; Ambassador Ib Petersen, Permanent Representative of Denmark to the United Nations; Ximena Del Rocio Peña Pacheco, National Assembly of Ecuador; and Petra Bayr, National Council of Austria. The session was moderated by journalist and author Andrew Revkin.

Session II examined the topic of gender as a linchpin of development and how to frame a new goal. The subject was discussed by Ambassador Gréta Gunnarsdóttir, Permanent Representative of Iceland to the United Nations; Ambassador George Wilfred Talbot, Permanent Representative of Guyana to the United Nations; Gabriela Montaño, President of the Senate, Plurinational State of Bolivia; and John Hendra, Assistant Secretary-General, Deputy Executive Director for Policy and Programme, UN-Women. The session was moderated by journalist Michelle Goldberg.

Session III examined the topic of democratic governance for sustainable development and its place among the new goals. Following a keynote address by Gunilla Carlsson, former member of the United Nations Secretary-General's High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda and former Minister of Development Cooperation of Sweden, the topic was discussed by the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations; Ambassador Paul Seger, Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations; Ambassador Eduardo Ulibarri, Permanent Representative of Costa Rica to the United Nations; Anne Makinda, Speaker of the National Assembly, United Republic of Tanzania; and Senator Aitzaz Ahsan, Pakistan. The session was moderated by news producer Nermeen Shaikh.

Session IV examined the topic of parliaments and the new post-2015 development agenda: getting ready for implementation, which was discussed by Ambassador Martin Sajdik, Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations and Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council; Olav Kjørven, Assistant Secretary-General and Director of the Bureau for Development Policy, United Nations Development Programme; Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, Speaker of Parliament, Bangladesh; and Senator Fauzaya Talhaoui, Senate of Belgium. The session was moderated by Anders B. Johnsson, Secretary-General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.